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ACTION WHA-01

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INFO	LOG-00	MFA-01	NP-00	AID-00	A-00	ACQ-00	CA-02
	CCO-00	CEA-01	CG-00	CIAE-00	CTME-00	INL-01	DINT-00
	DODE-00	DOT-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	FBO-01	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00
	INSE-00	IO-00	ITC-01	L-00	ADS-00	MMP-00	M-00
	AC-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OES-01	OIC-02
	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
	T-00	USIE-00	USSS-00	ASDS-01	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
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P 201328Z OCT 99
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1461
INFO DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
USDOC WASHDC
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 009715

DOE FOR HENRY SANTIAGO AND DAVID PUMPHREY
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/09
TAGS: EPET, PHUM, ENRG, ECON, ASEC, PBTS, PTER, PREL, PINR, CO, VE
SUBJ: U'WA VOW TO BLOCK OXY EXPLORATION, BUT NO THREAT OF SUICIDE

REF: BOGOTA 8918

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE BARBARA C. MOORE. REASON 1.5(D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) AS ANTICIPATED, THE U'WA INDIANS HAVE RENEWED THEIR THREAT

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TO PREVENT EXPLORATION OF THE SAMORE BLOCK (NORTE DE SANTANDER) IN THE WAKE OF GOC APPROVAL OF OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM'S (OXY) ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT (REF A). IT APPEARS THAT PERMIT ISSUANCE AND THE EXPANSION OF U'WA TERRITORY, FAR FROM RESOLVING THE CONTROVERSY, HAVE RE-IGNITED THE INDIANS' (AND THEIR NGO SUPPORTERS') RESOLVE TO PREVENT EXPLORATION. IF EXPLORATION DOES OCCUR, FARC-ELN-PARAMILITARY COMPETITION IN THE SURROUNDING AREA WILL LIKELY EXTEND INTO SAMORE, POSING A LEGITIMATE AND COMMON THREAT TO THE INTERESTS OF BOTH THE INDIANS AND OXY. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) THE U'WA INDIANS HAVE VOWED TO PREVENT EXPLORATION OF THE SAMORE BLOCK IN THE AFTERMATH OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MAYR'S SEPTEMBER 21 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT OXY'S PERMIT HAD BEEN APPROVED (REF A). WHILE THE FUTURE DRILL SITE LIES APPROXIMATELY FIVE KILOMETERS OUTSIDE OF THE U'WA RESERVATION (AND BARELY 10 KILOMETERS FROM THE VENEZUELAN BORDER), THE INDIANS CLAIM THAT IT REMAINS ON ANCESTRAL LANDS WHICH THE GOC FAILED TO INCLUDE IN THE SEPTEMBER QUINTUPLING OF U'WA TERRITORY.

3. (SBU) IN PRESS STATEMENTS, THE U'WA INSIST THAT CULTURAL
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PRESERVATION - NOT RESERVATION SIZE - IS THEIR MAIN CONCERN. AN OCTOBER 2 ARTICLE IN DAILY "EL ESPECTADOR" QUOTED AD/M-19 CONGRESSMAN GUSTAVO PETRO, AN U'WA BOOSTER AND REPUTEDLY A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CHAVEZ, AS SAYING THE GOC "COULD BE SUED FOR GENOCIDE FOR ALLOWING THE USURPATION OF SACRED LANDS." ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MAYR CONTINUES TO DEFEND PERMIT ISSUANCE, WHILE PLEDGING TO PROTECT INDIGENOUS RIGHTS. MEANWHILE, ENERGY MINISTER VALENZUELA REMINDS ANYONE WILLING TO LISTEN THAT COLOMBIA - IN THE MIDST OF ITS WORST RECESSION IN 60 YEARS - RELIES ON THE OIL SECTOR FOR 4.5 PERCENT OF GDP, OVER 20 PERCENT OF EXPORTS, AND NEARLY 30 PERCENT OF ITS REVENUE TRANSFERS TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS. FURTHERMORE, VALENZUELA ASSERTED THAT COLOMBIAN OIL PRODUCTION WILL BEGIN DECLINING NEXT YEAR, AND WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT NEW DISCOVERIES (LIKE THOSE EXPECTED IN SAMORE) THE COUNTRY WILL BECOME A NET OIL IMPORTER AS EARLY AS 2004.

4. (U) WITH THE SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL NGO'S, THE U'WA HAVE PLANNED OCTOBER PROTESTS IN BUCARAMANGA, YUMBO AND BOGOTA. THE INDIANS HAVE NOT THREATENED MASS SUICIDE (THIS TIME), AND INSTEAD, APPEAR TO BE SEARCHING WITH THE HELP OF THE NGO COMMUNITY FOR A LEGAL AVENUE TO BLOCK EXPLORATION. AS FOR THE ELN'S RESPONSE, IN A SEPTEMBER 29 TELEVISION NEWS INTERVIEW, COMMANDANTE "PABLO" OF THE DOMINGO LAIN FRONT PROCLAIMED THE MINISTER OF MINES, THE PRESIDENT OF ECOPETROL, OXY OFFICIALS, THE FUTURE DRILL SITE AND ANY OIL WORKERS OPERATING IN THE AREA AS "MILITARY OBJECTIVES."

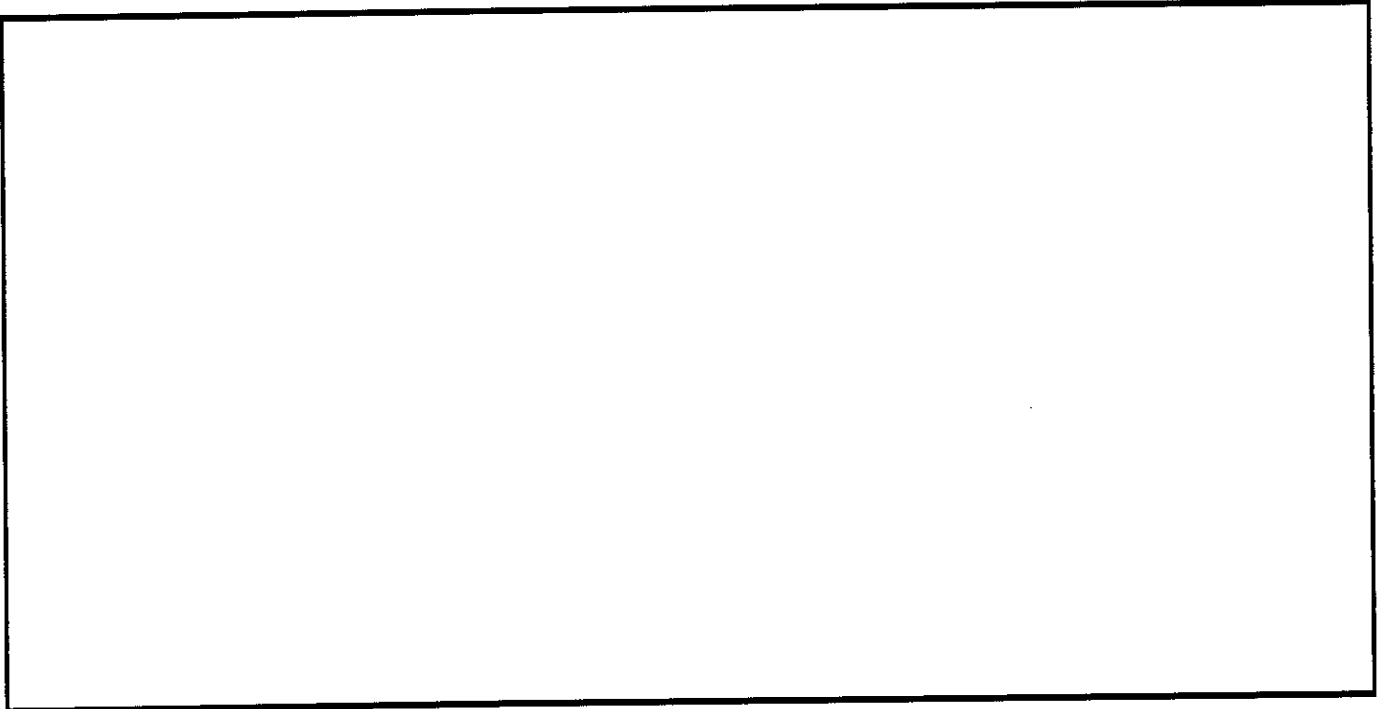
COMMENTS

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